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RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0858  
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1285  
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 3657  
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RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 1696  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000683

SIPDIS

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AF/S FOR B. NEULING  
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE  
AFR/SA FOR E. LOKEN  
COMMERCE FOR BECKY ERKUL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2011  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#)  
SUBJECT: BITI ON MDC PLANS, INTER-PARTY ENGAGEMENT

REF: (A) HARARE 424 (B) HARARE 355 (C) HARARE 95 (D)

03 HARARE 1971

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Eric T. Schultz under Section 1

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Summary  
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[¶1.](#) (C) MDC anti-senate faction Secretary General Tendai Biti on June 7 told poloff that resource constraints would probably delay faction plans to get people on the streets. He reported that ZANU-PF's Mnangagwa and Mujuru factions each were making pitches to faction President Morgan Tsvangirai, with Mnangagwa even offering to subordinate himself in a junior partnership. Biti stressed Tsvangirai's continued popularity and commitment to non-violence, and dismissed rival faction MP David Coltart's critique of intra-party violence as overblown, naQve and self-serving. End summary.

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Resource Constraints to Postpone Winter of Discontent?  
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[¶2.](#) (C) Biti advised that resource constraints would likely prevent the anti-senate faction from proceeding with plans to begin civil resistance plans before September. He said he continued to advocate commencing actions by early July, but he recognized that the party lacked key resources - i.e. transportation and salaried personnel - to pull anything off successfully in the near term. He denied there was any debate in the party over whether the people were ready to participate in such an action. He said he would need US\$40,000 over a three month period to undertake a credible national action plan.

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Mnangagwa, Mujuru Come a-Courting  
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¶13. (C) The anti-senate faction's Secretary-General confided that faction president Morgan Tsvangirai was secretly entertaining separate overtures from ZANU-PF's Mnangagwa and Mujuru factions. Each was seeking to have the anti-senate faction join in some unspecified future power sharing dispensation. According to Biti, Mnangagwa was willing to subordinate himself to Tsvangirai in exchange for cabinet slots and protection guarantees for affiliated businesses. Biti said Mujuru was only offering to take Tsvangirai in as a junior partner, which he said reflected the Mujuru faction's continued primacy.

¶14. (C) Biti said he was not involved in the talks and could not predict where they would end up. He acknowledged that the "Unity Accords" experience, by which ZANU-PF swallowed and neutralized its rival partner ZAPU during the 1980s, would continue to make many wary of a deal. That said, an "exhausted" populace might well accept a deal as the only way to break a status quo that was destroying the country. He said that until recently he would have been the last to countenance a government of national unity but he was now having second thoughts. In that regard, he said he and most Zimbabweans would readily sacrifice accountability for Mugabe and other ZANU-PF figures if that were the price of real change.

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On Tsvangirai, Coltart, Violence  
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¶15. (C) Biti emphasized the centrality of Morgan Tsvangirai to the opposition's political fortunes. Though not without faults, Tsvangirai commanded more respect and enthusiasm from the masses than any other figure in either faction of either party. The tens of thousands he drew in rallies across the country -- and the overtures from ZANU-PF's factions -- were testament to that. Tsvangirai's commitment to non-violent but open challenges to the regime reflected the desires of the country.

¶16. (C) Biti was excoriating in his assessment of pro-senate faction-aligned MP David Coltart's recent missive (e-mailed to AF/S) attacking the Tsvangirai faction for violence. He asserted that the intra-party violence Coltart raised was exaggerated and not encouraged or condoned by the party leadership. He noted that those most reviled within the anti-senate faction -- Welshman Ncube and Gift Chimankire, for example -- lived, worked and traveled openly in vulnerable locations but suffered no harm. "If there wasn't a constant and convincing priority from the top on non-violence, these people would have been attacked," he concluded.

¶17. (C) Biti he believed Coltart's stated convictions were genuine but naive and played to his personal aggrandizement at the expense of the party. Coltart was more concerned with international audiences more than local ones. Biti said Coltart "saw everything in black and white -- in a literal not a figurative sense." Race and place colored all his views. Biti compared Coltart unfavorably with Roy Bennett, the nationally popular party treasurer who "speaks Shona better than me." Bennett was culturally Zimbabwean; Coltart, who spoke not a word of local language, would always be an outsider.

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Bio Notes  
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¶18. (C) A polished and passionate speaker with a sharp sense

of humor, Biti is one of the party's most intelligent and versatile assets. He said Ncube had offered him the presidency of the pro-senate faction but that he had no regrets about remaining with Tsvangirai in spite of his faults. At a social event that included the faction's vice-president and popular national spokesman, all deferred to Biti. As he has in the past, Biti confided to poloff that he was exhausted and that the party asked too much of him because they always trusted he could do things better than others could. He said he envied Arnold Tsunga, a fellow lawyer who was to soon leave for a year on a Humphrey Fellowship, and reiterated that he hoped to "take a year abroad" in the coming years.

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Comment  
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19. (C) Discreet inter-party communications and intrigue are nothing new in Zimbabwe's long polarized political environment, and it would be premature to expect the latest discussions will go any farther than in the past. Each group involved in this kabuki so far seems still to be in a probing, hedging posture rather than on the verge of doing something bold to upset the status quo. That said, the talks are symptomatic of the growing national frustration over Mugabe's lack of an exit strategy -- a frustration that we believe will continue to grow especially as the economy

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continues to worsen. The apparent countenance of a government of national unity, even in theory, by an opposition hardliner such as Biti is a further testament to the centrality in Zimbabwe today of the national "exhaustion" to which Biti referred.  
SCHULTZ